

Environmental Studies

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NASA has been an Erie County neighbor for more than 45 years, and protection of the environment in and around Plum Brook Station has always been one of our highest priorities. In preparation for the Decommissioning Project, NASA made sure the environmental aspects of the project were considered. In 1998, NASA conducted an evaluation of several decommissioning alternatives and considered the environmental impacts associated with each alternative. NASA selected the safest and most thorough approach to decommissioning as its proposed action in order to reduce the residual radiation levels to meet the NRC's definition of unrestricted use. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides a framework that federal agencies must follow when undertaking any proposed major action - in this case - the Decommissioning.

In 2000, NASA conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) of its proposed decommissioning alternative, as required by NEPA. The EA considered a number of areas including: air quality & meteorology; water resources; waste generation, treatment, transportation & disposal; geology, soils & topography; noise, sonic boom & vibration; toxic substances and hazardous materials; biological resources & ecology; radioactive materials & non-iodizing radiation; endangered & threatened species; historical, cultural & archeological resources; wetlands, floodplains & prime or unique farmland; land use; socioeconomic factors (if related to impacts to natural or, physical factors); accidents involving hazardous, toxic or radioactive materials; environmental justice; pollution prevention; public health & safety; stratospheric ozone depletion & global climate change.

NASA published a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in the Federal Register in November 2000 then subsequently finalized the EA. On January 26, 2001 NASA initiated a 30-day public comment period on the EA, advertising (in five area newspapers) that the EA was available at local libraries for public review and comment. NASA received no public comments during this period, indicating public acceptance of NASA's Environmental Assessment. The EA resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on the earth, air or water in and around Plum Brook Station as a result of the possible impacts of decommissioning. NASA then advertised, beginning on April 5, 2001, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and provided a 45-day public comment period on the FONSI, which ended on May 20, 2001. Again there were no public comments on the FONSI.

The following pages provide detail on the NEPA and the EA conducted for the Reactor Facility Decommissioning Project.